

Alan Partridge

BIG BEACON

Foreword by Rt Hon. Grant Shapps MP

SEVEN DIALS

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Images courtesy of Baby Cow/BBC p.6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 (bottom); Baby Cow/Dave
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FROM
'THE RIME OF THE
ANCIENT MARINER'

The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

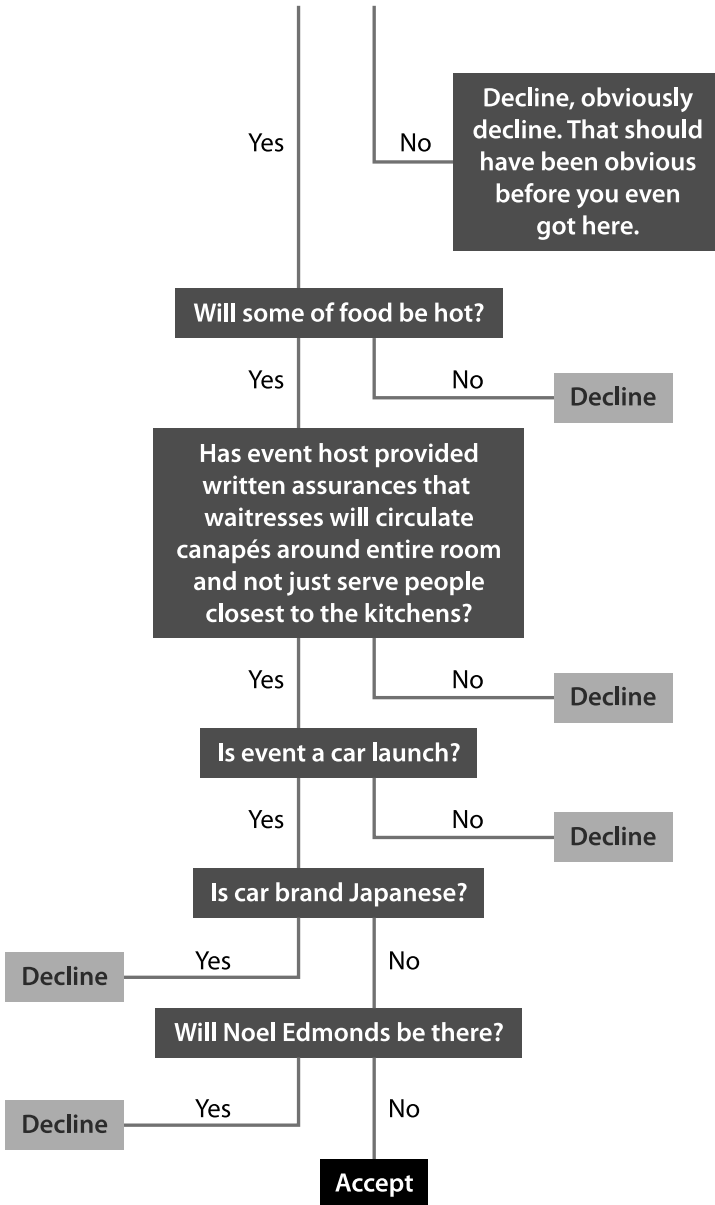
The light came on Oh! How it shone
As the keeper flicked the switch
It casts its spell, the rocks were quelled
The sea was now his bitch

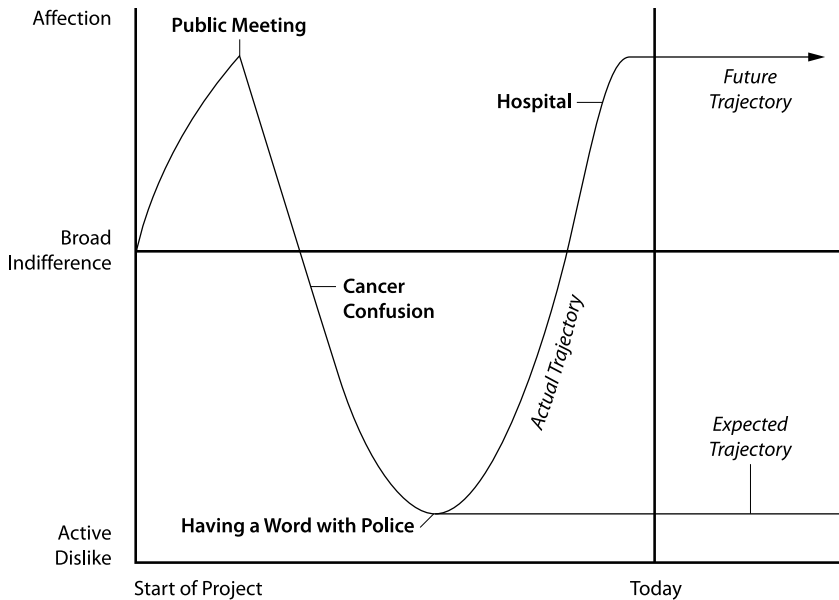
by
Samuel Taylor Coleridge (first verse)
and Alan Partridge (second verse)



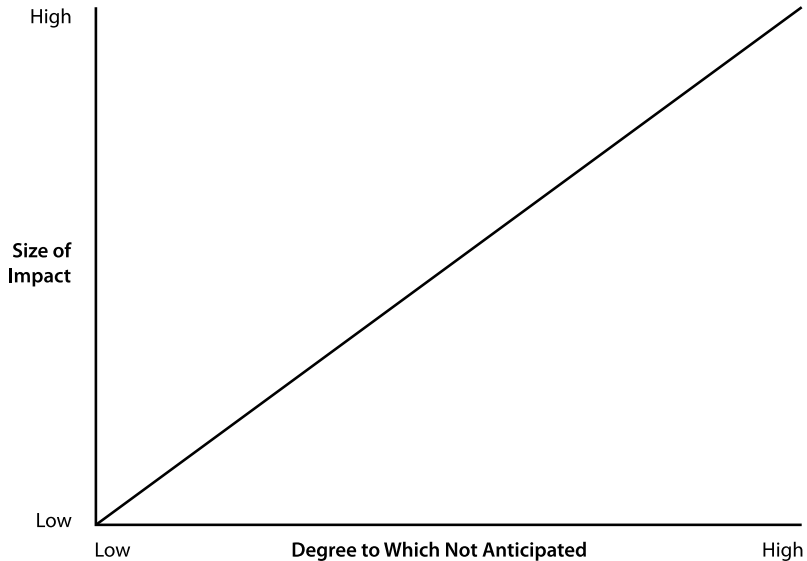
ALAN PARTRIDGE

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BIG BEACON





This picture was taken on a walk in Derbyshire shortly after Seldom ate the keys to this man's van. We waited for a number of hours for nature to take its course so that we could retrieve the keys from the animal's dung; the man and I sitting atop a drystone wall taking in the beauty of the Peak District, Seldom in the van with the radio on. Once the keys had emerged, me and the man swapped numbers and promised to keep in touch, but never have.



Cromer leisure centre sports hall. The location of my chance meeting with carpet impresario Brendan Coyle, ultimately leading to me fronting Norwich puff piece *Welcome to the Places of My Life*. The hall is used every Tuesday by a local secondary school, with a modesty partition erected down the middle of the court so the girls can get changed on one side and the boys on the other – although if you sit where the photographer is sitting here you do get to see both.



Publicity shot to promote my North Norfolk Radio show, *Mid Morning Matters*, 2012. I had the idea for this photoshoot while driving through Birmingham. Make of that what you will, but there was a certain streetwise quality to the show that I felt wouldn't be captured by the normal 'grinning DJ sitting behind mic holding a branded mug' shot. It's not for me to say if we were reinventing mid-morning local radio in East Anglia from the inside out (we were), but there was certainly no topic we weren't prepared to grapple with, apart from Israel. Also in these photos, my on-air sidekick Simon Denton, a man so camera-shy and with (by his own admission) so little presence that when these images were developed, I wasn't even sure he would appear in them! I'm glad he did.



Karl Howman wears floral print waistcoat, C&A spring/summer collection 1988.



Scissored Isle, 2016, and my interview with the female mayor of Greater Manchester. City Hall may have been hoping for a softball chit chat, but I had other ideas and sought to address the drug epidemic that had blighted the city on her watch. In a daring act of political theatre, I took a pellet of ecstasy just hours before the interview to confront the hapless politician with the visible after-effects of drug use – after all, what could be a clearer indictment of her administration’s catastrophic failure to tackle substance abuse than a respected broadcaster sweating and groaning just yards away from her? If a veteran TV presenter could get sucked into Manchester’s vortex of drugs, who else was at risk? Vicars? Grandmothers? Dogs? A stunningly powerful piece of television.



Few men alive have flown in a Spitfire, fewer still have done not one but two full loop-the-loops, as I did when taken for a flight by Captain Paul Wheeler in a piece for *This Time* about the unsung role of female RAF pilots in the Second World War. Oh, and the G-Force didn't even make me spew up.



As a committed direct debiter to Help for Heroes, I was privileged when *This Time* producers asked me to spend a day with these ex-Special Forces lads learning how to rescue a hostage from a building. I was fascinated to learn that as well as all the standard kit, British Special Forces wear knee protectors in case they need to discharge their firearm while sliding into a cave. In this photo I have removed my mask because it was making my face too hot.



Simon Denton. There's nothing wrong with him, this is just how he looks.



Joe Beesley and Cheeky Monkey. A temper problem, a weakness for alcohol and profound mental health issues have kept him off our screens for almost thirty years. And that's just Cheeky Monkey! I jest, but I learned an important lesson from Joe's appearance on *This Time*: never, ever give people a second chance.



Spending a night in a detention centre for boys aged 14–18 was a sobering reminder that even though I am a fully-grown adult, I could quite easily get battered by a child. And while my age and the fact I am a father meant I imagined myself (like Ray Winstone in the 1979 film *Scuzz*) going in there and saying 'I'm the daddy now', it turned out most of the lads had more children than I did. One of them had five! Hilarious.



This Time's roving reporter Ruth Duggan. I enjoyed a fantastic working relationship with Ruth. We got on great, I enjoyed our interactions, there was no issue. It's a little-known fact that Ruth doesn't have any journalism qualifications.

TV offers an immediacy that radio sometimes cannot. Here – in a piece for *This Time* on the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 – I use a bucket of butcher's waste to bring to life the tragic deaths of countless soldiers. I later discovered that though the butcher charged me £10.50 for the bag of pig bits, he normally gives them away for free. The following year a hike in business rates combined with increased competition from discount supermarkets saw him go out of business. Ain't life a bitch?



My tenure on *This Time* saw me push for a move away from the dross, fluff and flim-flam to a focus on hard-hitting investigative journalism. Here I'm mounting a hidden-camera sting operation to prove that certain BBC presenters (in this case Donty Mon) were in the business of accepting money in return for mentioning brands or products on air. And while on this occasion, Mr Mon refused the bung and acted with total propriety, is this always the case? I remain unsure. And surely it is not for me to prove his guilt, it is for him to prove his innocence.

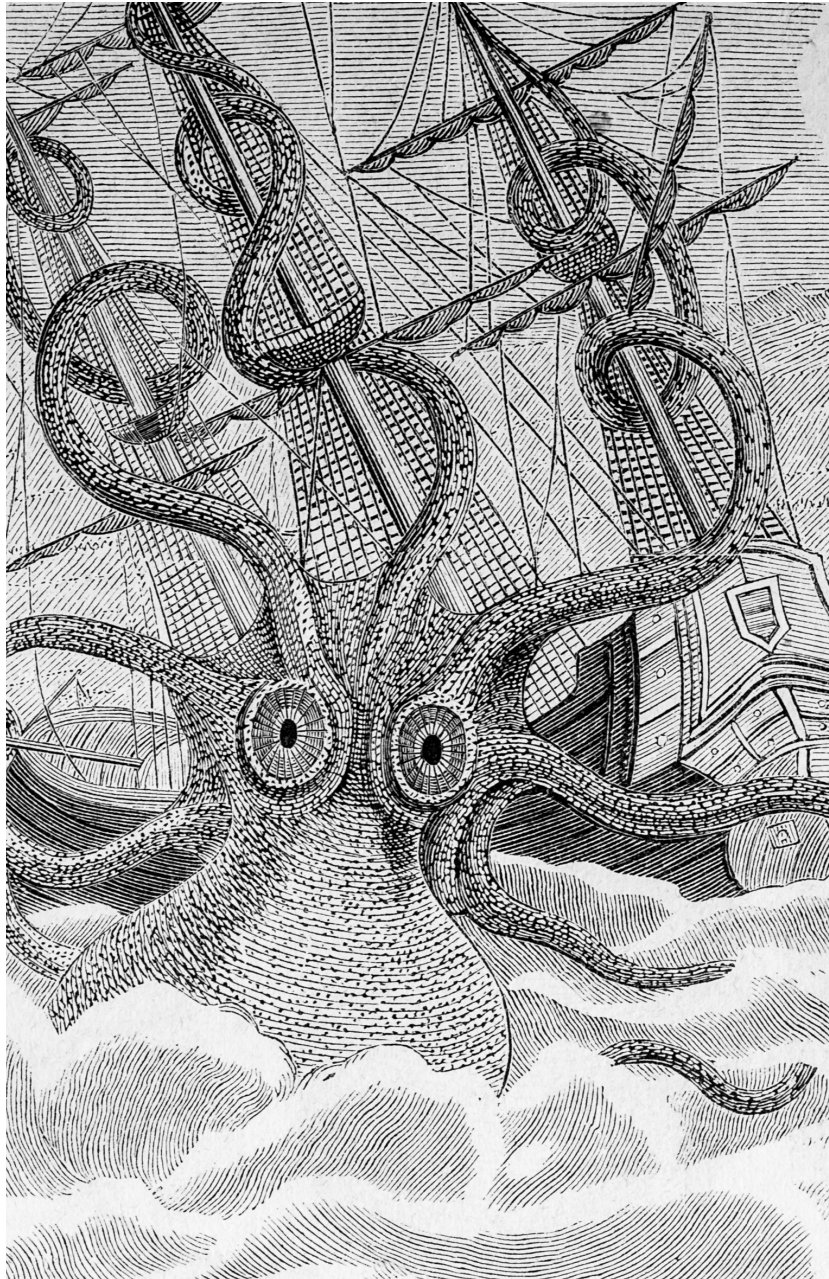
Her Royal Highness Princess Anne The Princess Royal. A fan of lighthouses since childhood and patron of the Northern Lighthouse Board since 1993, she is pictured here with a hairstyle that is an exact replica of waves breaking over Portland Bill lighthouse.



Rear view of Her Royal Highness Princess Anne The Princess Royal. Even from behind, Her Highness emits a dignity and grace that most other women can only dream of. She is just – and I hope you and she will excuse the profanity – a fucking brilliant royal. In the background, Jennie Gresham, shin reflected in table.



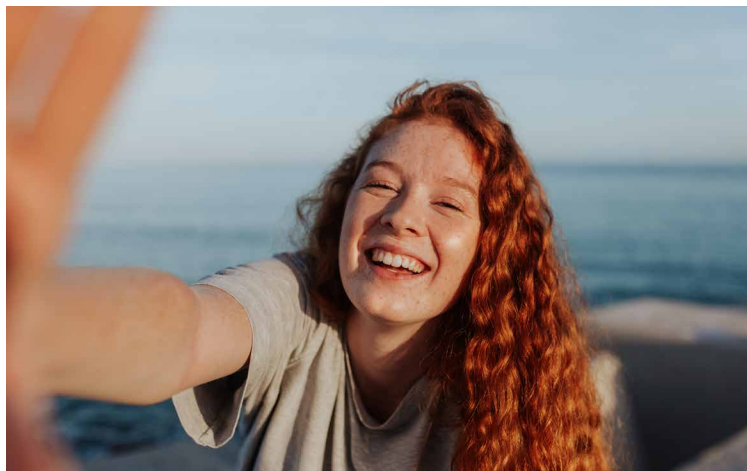
A lighthouse. While there's nothing unusual about wanting to restore one of these, the former TV doctor, Hilary Jones, suggested my desire to own such an obviously phallic structure stemmed from sexual inadequacy and anxiety over my ability to maintain an erection. I pointed out that his insistence on wearing tight-fitting t-shirts stemmed from anxiety that he has a girl's name (which he does), and a desire to show everyone he doesn't have tits (which he does).



The Kraken, the legendary sea monster so feared by mariners down the centuries. First written about by Italian priest Francesco Negri in the year 1700, if real, it would be the largest fish ever discovered.



My friend and confidante, Likeworm. From Rod Hull to Mary Poppins, to the lad from *Kes* to the late Bernard Matthews, humans have always sought to befriend birds – although to be fair, Bernard also slaughtered them. My assistant snapped this photo and was so pleased with it, she later told me she thought it was good enough to win a competition. I disagreed because it's just a gull eating his lunch.



A redhead. I've long been fascinated by the British redhead but had previously had a dalliance with only one – a woman called Jill from my production company who is now a grey-haired lollipop lady in Holt. That was until I fell in love with Red, the local girl from the Kent coast who (very briefly) stole my heart. Would I ever have a relationship with another redhead? Probably not. While the odd one or two (Elizabeth I, Bonnie Langford) have admirable qualities, most other redheads I've met (Sir Robin Cook, Geri Halliwell, the Duchess of York, Eddie Redmayne, Cilla Black) have been deeply unpleasant individuals. The woman pictured isn't the local girl who (very briefly) stole my heart, she's just a woman from Google Images with similar curls.



A photo of my hairdresser's son. He's not mentioned in the book and I've never met him in real life, but I was told if I included the picture I'd receive a 30% discount on any haircut valid until December 2024 and I was happy to agree.